

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 720

FL 026 505

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TITLE Foreign Language Teaching: What the United States Can Learn from Other Countries. ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics Report.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 2000-12-00
NOTE 36p.; Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education's Comparative Information on Improving Education Practice, Working Group 4. Publication on Web site funded by the National Library of Education, under contract number ED-99-CO-0008.
CONTRACT ED-00-PO-4609
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Applied Linguistics, 4646 40th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016. Tel: 202-362-0700; Web site: <http://www.cal.org/ericcll/countries.html>.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Computer Uses in Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foreign Countries; Inservice Teacher Education; Instructional Innovation; Language Attitudes; Learning Strategies; Preservice Teacher Education; Questionnaires; *Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *Teacher Education; Teacher Educator Education; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Content Area Teaching; *United States

ABSTRACT

In an effort to inform foreign language teaching efforts in elementary and secondary schools in the United States, a small-scale, 3-month exploratory study was designed to collect information that would highlight what was most interesting and illuminating about foreign language education in various countries. Twenty-two educators from 19 countries responded to a series of questions about methodologies, strategies, and policies in their communities that could help improve language teaching in the United States. From their responses, specific policies and practices were identified that could inform American language education. These characteristics are described in this report. The following implications for American schools were drawn from the study results: start language education early; learn from other countries' successes and failures; conduct long-term research; push for stronger federal leadership in language teaching; identify how technology can improve language instruction; improve teacher education; develop appropriate language assessment instruments; designate foreign language as a core subject; and take advantage of the rich sociolinguistic context in the United States. It is apparent that Americans can learn a lot from other countries in this area. The entire language education profession could benefit from systematic international collaboration in language teaching efforts. Three appendices contain a review of selected comparative language studies, a list of countries and language educators contacted, and a cover letter and sample questions. (Contains 39 references.) (KFT)

ED 447 720

ERIC

Report

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

What the United States Can Learn From Other Countries

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Center for Applied Linguistics

Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education's
Comparative Information on Improving Education Practice
Working Group 4
Policy Priority: Foreign Language Learning
December 2000

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Conduct long-term research.
Provide stronger leadership.
Identify how technology can improve language instruction.
Improve teacher education.
Develop appropriate language assessments.
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The project was conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. ED-00-PO-4609. Publication on this Web site was supported with funding from the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Library of Education, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0008. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of ED, OERI, or NLE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to inform foreign language teaching efforts in elementary and secondary schools in the United States, a small-scale, 3-month exploratory study was designed to collect information that would highlight what was most interesting and illuminating about foreign language education in various countries.

Twenty-two educators from 19 countries responded to a series of questions about methodologies, strategies, and policies in their countries that could help improve language teaching in the United States. From their responses to questions such as, "What do you think are three of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in your country?", specific policies and practices were identified that could inform U.S. language education. These characteristics are described in this report, organized by topic: An Early Start; A Well-Articulated Framework; Rigorous Teacher Education; Comprehensive Use of Technology; Effective Strategies; Strong Policy; Assessment; and Maintenance of Heritage, Regional, and Indigenous Languages.

Participants in the study were language educators from Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Israel, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Spain, and Thailand. Information on China, England, and Hong Kong was gathered from published comparative education reports.

The following implications for U.S. schools were drawn from the study results:

- **Start language education early.** Most of the countries surveyed begin language instruction for the majority of students in the elementary grades, while most schools in the United States do not offer foreign language classes until middle school or high school.
- **Learn from others.** We have much to learn from the failures and successes of other countries.
- **Conduct long-term research.** Longitudinal research is needed on the effectiveness of specific policies and practices, such as early language instruction.
- **Provide stronger leadership.** Strong leadership is needed at the federal level to create a forum for discussion and improvement of instruction.
- **Identify how technology can improve language instruction.** Research is needed on how best technology can improve language instruction.
- **Improve teacher education.** The United States needs to study how other countries offer high-quality in-service and pre-service education for foreign language teachers.
- **Develop appropriate language assessment instruments.** U.S. educators need to focus additional attention on the development and use of appropriate assessment instruments.
- **Designate foreign language as a core subject.** Designating foreign languages as a core subject area is essential for a successful program. In almost all the countries with successful language education programs, foreign language has the same status as other core subjects such as mathematics and reading.
- **Take advantage of the sociolinguistic context.** American educators need to take advantage of the context in which we live by promoting the learning of languages spoken by the many immigrants and refugees in our country.

It is apparent from this preliminary study that Americans have a lot to learn from the way other countries offer language education in their schools. The entire language education profession could benefit greatly from systematic international collaboration in our language teaching efforts.

This project was carried out by the Center for Applied Linguistics with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under contract no. ED-00-PO-4609. CAL worked collaboratively in these efforts with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, an internationally known center for graduate studies, research, and teacher education.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known in the United States that we have not kept up with the rest of the world in providing quality foreign language instruction to our students. During the last two decades, there have been numerous reports and articles decrying the mediocrity of our students' foreign language skills and calling for improved language education (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999; Rosenbusch, 1995; Tucker, 1991). In his testimony before the Senate Government Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services on *The State of Foreign Language Capabilities in National Security and the Federal Government* (September 19, 2000), Secretary of Education Richard Riley stated that strengthening foreign language instruction in the nation will build a better workforce, ensure national security, and improve other areas of education.

In this spirit, the U.S. Department of Education's Working Group #4, "Comparative Information on Improving Education Practice," was formed to help implement President Clinton's Executive Memorandum on International Education Policy, issued on April 19, 2000. The Working Group's task was to promote and encourage the dissemination of case studies and up-to-date information on best practices and provide a forum in which to develop strategies for conducting further research (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Their efforts are based on the premise that international comparisons offer much to leaders concerned with the improvement of schooling in the United States. The two areas identified as policy priorities for the United States were early childhood education and foreign language education. The Center for Applied Linguistics was asked to explore what can be learned about language education around the world by (1) reviewing comparative language education studies and (2) conducting interviews of language education professionals in countries whose policies and practices may inform those of the United States. The overall goal of the literature review and the interviews was to look for methodologies, strategies, or policies that could help improve language teaching in this country.

To address this goal, a small-scale, 3-month exploratory study was designed to collect information that would highlight what was most interesting and illuminating about foreign language education in various countries. Because of the limited scope of the study (time and resources), only a small group of countries could be included. A goal of approximately 20 countries was set. Those countries that were identified had educational systems from which we could learn the most were selected first, as well as those where we had contacts with educators. Initial contacts were made with 44 educators. As of the cutoff date for inclusion in the sample, we had received information from 19 countries. The omission of a particular country does not in any way imply that we could not have gained insight from their educational system; it merely means that in the time available, we were not able to pursue that information. The information collected from each country was intended to be a snapshot of foreign language teaching as presented by one educator; it does not represent an official or comprehensive response. Hence, the data collected from each country was qualitative; the study was not designed to be empirical or to collect quantitative data.

Twenty-two educators from the following 19 countries participated in the study: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Israel, Kazakhstan,

Luxembourg, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Spain, and Thailand. Additional information on China, England, and Hong Kong was gathered from published comparative education reports.

This report will provide the background to the study, outline the methodology used, summarize what educators have reported works in other countries, and discuss how U.S. school districts and institutions can learn from what is being done in other countries. A short review of other international comparative language education studies (Dickson & Cumming, 1996; Hamp-Lyons, Hood, Sengupta, Curtis, & Yan 1999; Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2000) is appended (Appendix A). Also appended are the list of educators interviewed (Appendix B) and the cover letter sent and sample questions asked (Appendix C).

BACKGROUND

This project was carried out by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. CAL worked collaboratively on this study with Alister Cumming, Head of the Modern Language Centre (MLC) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. The MLC, an internationally known center that conducts research in language education, has been involved in many international language studies, including the *Language Education Study* of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) that was used as a framework for the present study (Dickson & Cumming, 1996). Other language education experts consulted on this project were G. Richard Tucker of Carnegie Mellon University and Nadine Dutcher of the World Bank (retired).

METHODS

The first major task of the project was to identify language professionals in countries whose language education practices could inform those in the United States. Working with the IEA study's list of contacts, along with recommendations from scholars at OISE and the project consultants, we identified a number of such language professionals. These individuals were contacted for recommendations of additional knowledgeable language education professionals in their countries and other countries to be involved in the study. In many cases, the original person contacted was an appropriate spokesperson for their country and was available to be interviewed. From the educators originally contacted, we were able to obtain additional names, for an overall total of 44 language education professionals. From this total, we ultimately obtained responses from 24 experts representing 19 countries.

Our second task was to draft a protocol on best practices to guide the interviews. (See cover letter and sample questions in Appendix C.) The major parameters for our interviews were to (1) focus on policies and pedagogical principles in other countries and how the United States might benefit from them; (2) include open-ended questions, for example, "Describe what works best in the language programs in your country"; (3) explore practices related to both commonly taught and less commonly taught languages; and (4) include questions that address some of the five focus areas identified at the June 2000 New Visions Conference (architecture of the profession, curriculum, research, teacher recruitment, and teacher development).

Because foreign languages are defined differently in different settings, we debated how to define *foreign language* for the purposes of this study. Given the wide range of socio-cultural contexts of language education in the countries selected, we decided to tell respondents that we were interested in the *languages considered foreign in their countries*. We hoped that this delineation would help respondents focus on all the languages that we were interested in targeting. Our focus was on public (i.e., government-funded) school education, although we also welcomed information on successful aspects of

foreign language education in private schools.

The next step in the study was to gather data. The 44 educators identified for the study were either sent a questionnaire by e-mail or interviewed over the telephone, according to their preference. Educators from countries that had participated in the IEA study were also asked to update the descriptions of the language policy in their countries from the 1997 report.

The final and most challenging task entailed compiling the data and examining the responses for common elements that could inform U.S. policy and practice. Not surprisingly, certain threads ran through many of the countries' responses. We identified eight exemplary characteristics in responses to the key question, "What do you think are three of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in your country?"

OVERVIEW OF THIS REPORT

The results of the study are presented in the following section according to the characteristics identified, so that comparisons can be made between countries where appropriate. These are the eight characteristics: an early start; a well-articulated framework; rigorous teacher education; comprehensive use of technology; innovative methods; strong policy; role of assessment; and maintenance of heritage, regional, and indigenous languages. Naturally, it is important to keep in mind the unique socio-linguistic contexts for language use and instruction in each of the countries, including the profile of linguistic diversity within the country, the influence of neighboring countries with different languages in use, and the international status of the major societal languages.

In Section 3, we highlight what American educators can learn from these countries and present nine recommendations that will help the foreign language profession address global educational concerns of the 21st century. The report is concluded in Section 4 with strong recommendations for U.S. educators to be more open to ideas from other countries and to become more involved in international collaboration in language teaching efforts. Appendices include a review of selected comparative language education studies, a list of countries and language educators contacted, and a list of references.

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WHAT WORKS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

AN EARLY START

Many respondents reported that the early learning of foreign languages in elementary and preschool education promotes the achievement of higher levels of language proficiency in multiple languages. There also is a trend toward introducing foreign languages at earlier ages than before.

Table 1 below summarizes the ages at which the first foreign language is introduced to the majority of students. Of the 19 countries consulted, 7 have widespread or compulsory education in additional languages by age 8, and another 8 introduce foreign language in upper elementary grades. In many cases, a second foreign language is offered or required in the elementary grades. This contrasts starkly with the current situation in the United States, where, although there have been major increases in the number of early language programs, the majority of students do not start studying foreign language until age 14.

Table 1. FOREIGN LANGUAGES OFFERED AND AGE OF INTRODUCTION

Country	First Foreign Language	Starting Age	Compulsory*	Widely Available	Additional Foreign Languages
Australia	French	6		X	German, Greek, Italian, Japanese
Austria	English	6	X		French, Italian
Brazil	English	11 or 12	X		Spanish, French, German
Canada	French	10	X		German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Punjabi
Chile	English	>12	?		French, German, Italian
Czech Republic	English and German	9	2X		French, Russian, Spanish
Denmark	English	10	2X		German, French, Spanish
Finland	English or other	9	2X		Swedish, Finish, German, French, Russian, Spanish, Italian
Germany	English or other	8	2X		French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Turkish
Israel	English	10	X		Hebrew, French, Arabic
Italy	English	8	X		French, German, Spanish, Russian
Kazakhstan	English	10	X		German, French
Luxembourg	German and French	6 and 7	2X		English, Italian, Spanish
Morocco	French	7	X		English, Spanish, German
Netherlands	English	10 or 11	2X		German, French
New Zealand	French	>12		X	Japanese, Maori, German, Spanish
Peru	English	>12	?		French, German
Spain	English	8	X		French, German, Italian, Portuguese
Thailand	English	6	X		French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic
United States	Spanish	14		X	French, German, Japanese

* 2X means that two languages are compulsory.

In Thailand, English is a compulsory subject beginning in Grade 1. In Italy and Spain, compulsory foreign language instruction begins in Grade 3, with some schools experimenting with foreign language teaching as early as kindergarten. In Morocco, a new education reform law calls for French instruction, which is required for all students, to begin in second grade instead of third (as was the case until now), and for English instruction to begin in fifth grade instead of tenth.

As of the 1998-1999 school year, 80-90% of all primary schools in Austria introduce the first foreign language in Grade 1. In most schools, this language is English. In theory, if at least two thirds of the parents are in favor of offering a different language, Croatian, Czech, French, Hungarian, Italian, Slovak, or Slovene, may be taught instead; but in practice, this is hardly ever the case. In first and second grades, the foreign language is integrated into other subjects taught; in third and fourth grades, the foreign language is taught as a separate subject for 1 hour per week. Additionally, since 1991-1992, students have the option of studying a second foreign language from third grade onwards.

Over the last couple of years, Germany, too, has introduced the first foreign language in third grade (age 8 or 9). As of this year, of the 1,197 elementary schools in the state of Hesse, 1,070 are offering 2 hours per week of foreign language instruction in third grade. However, in the long run it is expected that foreign language instruction will universally shift toward first grade, as is already the case in the southern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

In most German schools, the first foreign language is English. In border regions, however, the first foreign language is that of the neighboring country: for example, Dutch and Danish in Northwestern and Northern Germany, respectively, Polish in Eastern Germany, and French along the French border. For children in these regions, English is the second foreign language.

In Luxembourg, a multilingual country where proficiency in at least three languages is expected, 1 year of optional preschool education (*éducation précoce*) is offered to 4-year-olds who do not speak Luxembourgish. At preschool, the children learn Luxembourgish through immersion in everyday tasks and play. The same approach, augmented by explicit teaching in small groups, is adopted in 2 years of compulsory preschool education for 5- and 6-year-olds who do not speak Luxembourgish. Literacy is introduced in first grade through the German language. In second grade, children are introduced to spoken French, and in third grade, written French is added to the curriculum. In most cases, German and French are formally taught on an oral and written basis throughout Grades 3 to 6, with Luxembourgish remaining a vehicle for communication and interaction. Just 1 hour a week is devoted to oral Luxembourgish, with an average of 6 to 8 hours per week devoted to the teaching of German and French (ages 7 to 12).

In Canada, starting ages for language study vary by province and program type. In Ontario, for example, most students who do not have French family backgrounds begin core French (several hours per week in which French is taught as a school subject for a minimum of 600 hours per year) in fourth grade (age 10). As in all the provinces, French immersion is another educational option available to students. Immersion education, cited as a major milestone in Canadian educational reform, is a full school program in French for elementary school learners for a minimum of 3,800 hours in French per year. Extended French (a reduced form of immersion, with some of the school curriculum in English, for a minimum of 1,260 hours in French per year) is also offered in elementary and secondary grades, usually starting from Grade 4 or age 10.

A WELL-ARTICULATED FRAMEWORK

Several respondents noted the importance of a well-articulated curriculum framework to motivate and guide the development of a strategic, coherent, and transparent system of foreign language education in their respective countries. Such frameworks, which may exist at the international (as in the Council of Europe) or national levels, may differ to the extent of their specificity; but they nevertheless bring consistency and coherence to language education by coordinating the efforts of the organizations and initiatives involved in the various sectors and stages of education (see, e.g., Nuffield, 2000, p. 84).

Many European countries have already adapted their foreign language learning and teaching at the national level to the overall frameworks and standards articulated by the Council of Europe's language policy and activities, and will continue to do so in the future (Council of Europe, 1996). For example, in Italy, the need to adjust to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe, 1996) "ha[s] introduced new policies and different and more challenging perspectives in foreign language education" and increased the attention paid to foreign languages by the Ministry of Education, the business world, parents, and media.

The Council of Europe has undertaken a succession of modern languages projects that have had positive results in many of the member states. Study respondents, specifically those from Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain, pointed out that during the past decade the Council has launched several projects to assist its member states to promote multilingualism. For example, *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe, 1996), developed and revised over the past decade, has had high impact. The *Framework* is a planning instrument that provides a common basis and terminology for describing objectives, methods and approaches, skills, practices, and assessments in language teaching, and it is used for planning syllabuses, examinations, teaching materials, and teacher training programs throughout Europe. In order to optimize its use, a *General Guide* as well as a series of specialized *User Guides* have been developed for policy makers, examiners, providers of adult education, teachers, teacher trainers, learners in schools and in adult education, curriculum developers, and textbook writers.

A more recent project of the Council of Europe Language Policies for a Multilingual and Multicultural Europe (1997-2000) launched other activities, including the description of threshold levels that provide operational models of what learners should be able to do when using a language in daily life. So far, threshold level descriptions have been drawn up for more than 20 languages.

Another activity is the European Language Portfolio, the development of a personal document in which learners record their language qualifications. The aims of the Portfolio are two-fold: (a) to motivate learners by acknowledging their language learning efforts at all levels throughout their lives, and (b) to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills students have acquired, to be consulted when they move to a higher learning level or seek employment at home or abroad.

In Australia, one of the most influential projects undertaken nationally was the Australian Language Levels (ALL) Project (Scarino, Vale, McKay, & Clark, 1988), a national generic framework that attempted to provide an integrated model of curriculum development that captured the commonalities across languages, some related work in specific languages, and teacher professional development and research.

The *ALL Guidelines* had impact on further major national curriculum development, particularly in Asian languages (Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese) in a context when national projects of any kind were a rarity. Another impact was at senior secondary level. The *ALL Guidelines* were used as a basis for the National Assessment Framework for Languages at Senior Secondary Level (NAFLaSSL), which is a framework for guiding collaborative syllabus development and common assessment at exit from senior secondary schooling, particularly in the so-called "small candidature" languages (i.e., less commonly taught languages in U.S. terminology). The *ALL Guidelines* also became the basis for teacher education. (Scarino et al., 1988)

In New Zealand, too, one of the most successful strategies, according to our respondent, is "development of national syllabuses and curriculum guidelines in different language areas . . . provid[ing] consistency in course content and programme delivery."

RIGOROUS TEACHER EDUCATION

One of the most often cited factors related to excellence in foreign language education, because in all areas of education, is well-trained teaching professionals. Seldom discussed, but nevertheless crucial, is the status of the teaching profession as it directly impacts the quality of candidates who go into teaching. For example, in Finland, language education benefits from the fact that teachers are recruited from among the best high school graduates. Teaching has been a highly appreciated profession for a variety of reasons, and admission to universities, where all teacher education now takes place, is highly competitive. This creates a high degree of selectivity, which in turn increases the prestige of university studies. The high regard accorded to the teaching profession can be traced back to teachers' important role in the building of the Finnish nation, the relatively high pay (especially for women when compared with the private sector), the benefits, and the job security.

Pre-Service Training

Several of the experts we consulted considered rigorous pre-service training, that which integrates academic subject studies with pedagogical studies and teaching practice, as one of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in their respective countries.

In Morocco, English teachers constitute one of the best-trained corps of teachers in the country. After a 4-year degree in English from a university or teacher training college, including 1 year of specialization in either literature or linguistics, students spend a year studying language teaching methodology and getting practical training at the Faculty of Education. The majority of English-teaching faculty in universities and teacher training colleges hold doctoral or masters degrees from British or American universities.

In Germany, teacher training consists of two stages: first, all *Bundeslaender* (states) require a university degree, which is equivalent to a masters degree with a double major in two academic subjects. For language majors, about half of the course work focuses on academic subject matters, while the other half consists of courses such as applied linguistics or didactics. In addition, students participate in a 6-week teaching practicum in each of their two majors.

The second stage of teacher training is a 1½-year internship, during which students are assigned to schools under the supervision of expert teachers while attending weekly seminars in pedagogy and didactics. This stage ends with a state-administered examination, the "Second State Exam." This rather demanding exam consists of two demonstration lessons (one in each subject), a thesis (in most cases based on an applied research project), and a 2-hour oral exam.

In Finland, all teacher education takes place at universities. All teacher education departments have a large practice school with experienced teacher educators. Most foreign language teacher educators continue their studies toward the Ph.D.

In Denmark, teacher training for the *Folkeskole* (Grades 1 through 10) changed in 1997 and now requires academic study of four, rather than two, academic subjects. The addition of two subject areas to the mandatory study of Danish and mathematics led to an increase in teachers who are specially trained in foreign language teaching. In addition, there has been a change toward requiring fewer courses in general didactics (teaching methodology and methods) and more courses in subject-specific didactics, and a closer interdependence of theoretical knowledge (of language acquisition) and teaching internships, which are part of the curriculum.

In both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the high level of language proficiency among foreign language teachers is specifically related to study and work abroad programs. In the Netherlands, students who intend to become language teachers are likely to have studied abroad while obtaining their first, subject-area degree.

In the United Kingdom, almost all full-time students in specialist language degree programs spend a year studying or working abroad as part of their degree requirements. In addition, successfully recruiting teachers from other countries through the reciprocal Foreign Language Assistants program enables schools to appoint higher education students from other countries as classroom aides and living exponents of their language. (See Nuffield, 2000, pp. 38 and 90.)

Another successful development in several European countries is the expansion of foreign language teacher training at institutions of higher learning. In most German states, there is a trend toward integrating all teacher training into their universities and offering new degree programs for "language specialists," that is, foreign language teachers for specific purposes outside the school sector.

Likewise, in the Czech Republic, new teacher training departments for foreign languages have been established, and in Italy, pre-service post-graduate teacher education courses and new graduate courses for primary school teachers were recently introduced.

In-Service Training

In-service training for foreign language teachers was also considered one of the keys to success in several countries studied.

In Italy, foreign language teachers can look back at a long tradition of in-service training, especially compared to teachers of other subjects. An in-service program launched in 1978 (see Lopriore, 1998) was subsequently expanded to include a system of nation-wide training courses for primary school teachers.

Since 1990, Spain has required primary school teachers who teach languages to be specialists in their respective foreign language. Teachers who were not specialists in their language had to take additional training if they wanted to retain their positions, or they had to re-apply as non-specialist teachers.

Our experts from Finland, Germany, and Thailand reported that teachers' awareness of additional training and their participation in courses, seminars, and conferences are very high. In Germany, all states have very elaborate in-service training in place, allowing teachers to choose from a variety of courses offered at regional or state education centers. Each teacher is eligible for 1 week per year of in-service training, and courses are paid for by the state. At present, there is some discussion about making in-service training mandatory.

In the Czech Republic, foreign language teachers are increasingly taking the opportunity to study abroad or attend international courses in countries with excellent reputations for foreign language teaching, such as the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands.

In China, successful efforts to improve the language skills and teaching methods of language teachers include sending teachers abroad for further study or having them trained by English teachers from abroad. (See Hamp-Lyons et al., 1999, pp. 59f.)

COMPREHENSIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Innovative technologies and media were frequently cited by the responding country experts as a way of increasing access to information and entertainment in a foreign language, increasing interaction with speakers of other languages, and improving foreign language teaching in the classroom. However, little evaluation exists on the use of technology for language instruction, so we do not know precisely what value is added through technology.

Access to Information and Entertainment

Most of our respondents, in particular those from Canada, Denmark, and Thailand, highlighted the importance of the Internet and specialized databases for information retrieval. Frequently, Internet users find that they need proficiency in a foreign language to obtain needed information, for example, for content-specific project work.

In smaller countries, many of the television shows or popular music are broadcast in a foreign language, with TV shows subtitled rather than dubbed. In Denmark, for instance, where English is omnipresent through the many U.S. and British television programs, films, computer games, and music videos, teachers, rather than dismissing these texts as "trash," have developed successful strategies for integrating their students' informal foreign language exposure into their classroom teaching.

Interaction and Collaboration With Speakers of Other Languages

In addition to providing access to information on the World Wide Web, the use of new information technologies, especially networked computers, has contributed to increased communication among foreign language teachers and students in many countries. Through e-mail, mailing lists, discussion groups, and chat rooms, the Internet has greatly increased access to and communication in the foreign language with both native and non-native speakers.

In Canada and Thailand as well as in most European countries, teachers and their students at all levels of proficiency now interact and collaborate with their peers on shared projects via e-mail, Web sites, and bulletin boards. In Denmark, for instance, English is frequently used to communicate with schools in English-speaking countries or with schools in countries where students' level of English proficiency is similar to that of the Danish students, for example, the Baltic States or the Netherlands.

In Catalonia, Spain, more than 250 schools with more than 100,000 students over 12% of all students in Catalonia participate in programs such as COMENIUS, an initiative of the EU to promote intercultural awareness and language learning. COMENIUS supports a variety of initiatives in the areas of school partnerships, training of school education staff, and school education networks. Students from at least three schools in three different European countries participate actively in all phases of each COMENIUS project, including planning, organization, and evaluation of the activities. While the primary focus of the projects is the cooperation process itself, projects usually produce additional outcomes such as project diaries, booklets, artistic performances, Web sites, CD-ROMs, and so forth. Topic areas for projects do not have to be language related; however, the language used to design and interact at a distance with one's peers is not the mother tongue, but one or more foreign languages for all participating schools.

Computer Use in the Classroom

Responding country experts reported that computers are increasingly used to promote active language learning in the classroom. In Denmark, for example, computers are used for process-oriented writing in the foreign language.

In Luxembourg, the Education Department has produced a simple yet highly versatile oral word processor, TEO (Text Editor Oral), that encourages the development of oral expression skills through story building in both native and foreign languages. The TEO is now in use in several primary schools, most notably in those with students from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, "where its aim is to stress the importance of developing a fluent, articulate command of language in pupils and foster the transition from concrete to formal operational reasoning" (TEO Abstract).

Several additional projects are being conducted in Luxembourg under the umbrella DECOPRIM (*Développement des communications orales et écrites à l'école primaire*). These projects seek to identify practices that are effective at stimulating the development of oral and written communicative skills through the use of computers in preschools and primary schools. DECOPRIM, which was honored with a "European Label" for innovative language learning, covers all three official languages used in education Luxembourgish, German, and French and aims to integrate new technologies into language learning. The teaching materials that resulted from the project are also suitable for pre-service and in-service teacher training.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Respondents mentioned several successful innovative methods for language instruction, which fall roughly into the following categories:

- Integration of language and content learning
- Communicative teaching methods
- Focus on language learning strategies
- Building on the first or subsequent languages
- Other successful methods

Integration of Language and Content Learning

An excellent way to make progress in another language is to use it for a purpose, so that the language is used as a tool rather than as an end in itself. Learning content-area subjects through the medium of a foreign language has become increasingly popular in many of the responding countries. Although they differ with respect to their underlying goals and concepts, their student populations, the status of the respective languages being used, and their organization and implementation, two ways of integrating language and content learning can be distinguished:

- 1) Content-based instruction in which a foreign language is used as the medium of instruction in non-language subjects, frequently at the secondary school level when students have acquired sufficient proficiency in the foreign language.
- 2) Immersion programs called "bilingual programs" in Europe in which usually primary school children are taught subject matter almost exclusively in a second or foreign language.

Foreign Language as a Medium of Instruction

Our respondents from Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands stated that various school subjects frequently geography, history, music, or physical education, and sometimes vocational or technical subjects are being taught predominantly in English at the secondary school level.

In the Netherlands, there are large vocational schools in areas such as hotel management, for example,

that use French or Spanish as the language of instruction in several subjects, if appropriate for the content matter.

In Luxembourg, both German and French are used as a medium of instruction throughout students' school careers, as the simultaneous learning of several languages cannot happen otherwise.

In Finland, following the recommendations of a national working party in 1990, Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) spread rather quickly as a means of improving language proficiency. In a survey carried out in the mid 1990s on CLIL in vocational schools, it was found that at least one third of the vocational institutions had CLIL in some form. (For a comprehensive review, see Takala, Marsh, & Nikula 1998.) A survey covering comprehensive schools and the upper secondary schools in 1996 showed that 5% of lower stage schools (Grades 1-6), 15% of upper stage schools (Grades 7-9), and 25% of upper secondary schools had CLIL in some form. In most cases, the language of instruction is English, and the extent of CLIL varies from a rather limited exposure (a short course or a dozen lessons) to a considerable part of the curriculum.

One of our Australian respondents stated that there are programs using the following foreign languages as a medium of instruction throughout Australia: Chinese, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Khmer/Cambodian, Malay-Indonesian, Polish, Spanish, and Turkish. The programs are found at all levels of schooling, but more frequently at the primary level. They are often side-by-side programs for non-native speakers of the language, that is, complete new learners, with a mixing of the groups for some subjects taught in English.

Immersion (Bilingual) Programs

One of the most successful and widely researched practices in Canada over the past 3 decades is immersion education, mainly for the English-speaking majority learning French (see, e.g., Genesee, 1987; Lapkin, 1998; Swain & Johnson, 1997; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Turnbull & Lapkin, 1999).

In Austria and the Netherlands, so-called "bilingual education," which is comparable to North American immersion programs, has become increasingly in demand. Most programs are in English and can be found in mainstream settings in predominantly monolingual areas.

In Germany, many schools start what they call "learning through a foreign language" in first grade, spending half the day using German, the other half using the foreign language. Usually these programs, most of which are fairly new, are two-way immersion; that is, half the children are German speaking, the other half are native speakers of the foreign language. Berlin, for example, has 14 two-way schools, where instruction is in German and English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Modern Greek, or Turkish.

Similarly, our Australian expert reported a growing number of two-way immersion programs across Australia that are being instituted by local authorities and schools.

Communicative Teaching Methods

According to our experts in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, and Spain, a focus on communicative and intercultural learning not only stimulated a productive discussion of teaching objectives, methods, and underlying rationales, which are now reflected in curricula and textbooks, but also resulted in increased oral and written proficiency and fluency for their students.

In Peru, a project to teach Spanish to Quechua-speaking children in predominantly rural areas, although generally hampered by lack of resources and well-trained teachers, is nevertheless successful: All children, regardless of grade or proficiency level, are exposed to Spanish through communicative activities. Such activities may include games and songs that reflect the cultural environment of the children at the beginning of the school year. As the year progresses, these activities gradually include experiences and cultural referents beyond the rural environment.

In recent years, Western-style teaching methods have been introduced to the People's Republic of China. However, although Western communicative approaches have been very valuable, educators also realize that they have to be modified to Chinese learners' needs and the specific socio-cultural context of language teaching and learning in China. (See Hamp-Lyons et al., 1999, p. 60.)

Focus on Language Learning Strategies

Several European respondents reported that a recent focus on *how* to learn a foreign language has been important to the success of language education in their countries. In the Netherlands, for example, learners are increasingly asked to reflect on and become more responsible for their own language learning. In addition, high standards and explicit course objectives are set for all levels of instruction.

In Denmark, the curriculum for the *Folkeskole* specifies certain central knowledge and proficiency areas for foreign language education, including awareness of language acquisition, which means that teachers raise students' awareness of various communication strategies. For example, teachers discuss strategies to bridge vocabulary gaps, reading and listening strategies, and general language learning strategies.

Building on the First or Subsequent Languages

Particularly in bilingual or multilingual countries or in those with a large number of language minorities, our experts stated that successful approaches consider the students' first language(s) as a foundation upon which to build second language proficiency.

In Luxembourg, projects like DECOLAP (Développement des compétences langagières dans l'éducation préscolaire), DECOPRIM (Développement des communications orales et écrites à l'école primaire), and MIRA (Multimedia Interface for Research and Authoring) demonstrate that acknowledging the socio-cultural context and the already developed competencies of children in their own language will boost their learning of subsequent languages and thus contribute to an attitude of language learning adapted to Luxembourg's multicultural and multilingual context and situation.

In Morocco, success in English language learning is attributed at least in part to the fact that students have already learned at least two other languages, Standard Arabic and French, as school languages in Grades K through 9, before they start learning English.

Other Successful Methods

These are other successful methods reported by our experts.

- **Teaching in the Foreign Language.** In Morocco, one best practice is that foreign language teachers use only the foreign language in the classroom. As a result, after 3 years of study in Grades 10 through 12, students are able to function at an intermediate (middle to high) level of oral and written proficiency.

- **Modular Teaching.** In Italy, the modular approach to teaching has been used very recently for introducing an optional second foreign language, grouping 15 students according to their proficiency level rather than by age or grade level.
- **Project-Oriented Learning.** In Denmark, the increased use of obligatory project-oriented learning, especially in the higher grades (8 through 10), emphasizes not only the use of authentic materials through the use of technology, but also integrates learning about English-speaking countries frequently other than the United Kingdom or the United States of America with language and content learning: for example, learning about Aborigines in Australia or environmental issues in Canada.

STRONG POLICY

A number of respondents mentioned the importance of policy formulation, because language and education policies at the national, regional, and local levels can facilitate or inhibit strong language education.

Language and Education Policies

In Australia, one of the most successful aspects of foreign language education relates to the National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco, 1987), which provides a framework for language education. The NPL initiated pluralism in the languages being offered, supports projects for indigenous and first language education, has led to policy development in each of the eight states/territories of Australia, and has resulted in the near-universal introduction of languages at the primary level. Another aspect of NPL was the establishment of the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (since 1996, Language Australia), an organization connecting research nodes across Australian universities and education departments.

A second Australian policy on the federal level with high impact is the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategies (NALSAS), which provides targeted funding to state education authorities for four key Asian languages—Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, and Korean—and a range of support schemes to encourage languages under the 1991 Australian Language and Literacy Policy. The NALSAS is based on statistics of Australia's most important Asian trading partners. As a result, Australian students can choose from a wide variety of Asian foreign languages in addition to the traditional European languages. According to our respondent, the public policies on languages have been very successful in raising both awareness and interest in languages in Australia.

In Israel, a new language policy was introduced in 1996, in which the Ministry of Education redefined the school-related aspects of language policy (see Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). This policy is termed "three plus." This means that for Jews it is compulsory to learn three languages—Hebrew, English, and Arabic—plus additional languages (e.g., heritage languages such as Yiddish or Ladino; community languages such as Russian, Amharic, or Spanish; or world languages such as Japanese, Chinese, German, etc.). Arabic, Hebrew, and English are also compulsory for Arabs; they may choose any other languages as their additional languages.

Our Finnish expert reports that the success of Finnish foreign language education is based on the national long-term and systematic macro-level language and language-in-education planning that helped create a solid national infrastructure for more micro-level developments (see, e.g., Sartoneva, 1998; Takala, 1998). In 1979, a comprehensive review of the current status and projected needs led to a large number of concrete proposals for action. In his words,

for educational effectiveness/efficiency and definitely also for educational equity, it is vitally important that systems and institutions are well planned and that they work well so that they provide a good basis for a variety of developments and innovations at all the other vitally important levels of educational activity. (Takala, 1998, pp. 421430)

In Spain, a government act (LOGSE) prescribes a core curriculum and precise time allocation with a compulsory timetable in the weekly teaching load. Foreign languages account for between 9% and 11% of contact hours in primary education. This compulsory minimum amount of instruction in languages guarantees that they will be taught early.

Other respondents emphasized the importance of national policies that allow great flexibility at the local level in facilitating strong language education. Both our Austrian and Danish experts consider it a strength of their respective education systems that teachers are given tremendous freedom within the curricular framework provided by the government.

Two cases that point to the important role the government plays in overall education development are Chile, where the whole educational system was very much neglected during the dictatorial regime (1973-1990), and Kazakhstan, where tremendous efforts are underway to reverse the effects of Russification and international isolation under Soviet rule. In both cases, policies in education will be critical factors in language education. For example, the age at which language education begins as well as the required amount of language instruction are a significant policy matter that was discussed above.

Foreign Languages as Core Subjects

Arguably one of the most influential policies with respect to foreign language learning is the status of languages within the school curriculum. In all European countries and in Canada, Kazakhstan, Morocco, and Thailand, at least one foreign language is compulsory for all students.

In Germany, for instance, foreign languages claim the same status as mathematics, reading, writing, and social studies. All universities require two foreign languages for admittance: The first one, in most cases English, must have been studied for 9 years, the second, often French, for at least 5 years. Moreover, students in secondary schools that lead to university study have to take at least one foreign language as part of the *Abitur*, the national school-leaving examination.

In Finland, foreign language learning has been accorded the status of core study. This means that, since the early 1970s, all students study a minimum of two languages: one of the two official languages, Swedish or Finnish (whichever is not native to the student), and one foreign language, most often English). At least one third of students elect to study a third foreign language. The study of one of the official languages and one foreign language remains obligatory at the tertiary level, that is, in the polytechnics and universities.

ASSESSMENT

Interestingly, few respondents mentioned innovations in assessment in their countries. In most of the countries, nearly all assessment of students' foreign language learning occurs in the context of specific courses, with grades or credit for completion assigned by teachers. The only national or regional examinations that include language proficiency assessments are school-leaving examinations administered at the end of secondary education. However, several educators highlighted assessment as one of the best practices in foreign language education in their country. These practices are worth reporting given the salience of assessment in U.S. education.

In the Netherlands, there are central school-leaving examinations developed nationally by a national testing institute (CITO) and administered at the end of secondary school education. About 30% of Dutch students, those attending the pre-university stream (VWO), take the exam at the end of 12th grade (age 18). The exam includes achievement tests in three foreign languages: English (reading, writing, listening, speaking), French (reading), and German (reading).

About 40% of Dutch students, those attending a middle stream leading into polytechnic education (MAVO), take a central school-leaving exam after Grade 10 (age 16). This exam includes assessment of English proficiency and speaking/listening skills in either French or German. In both examinations, the results account for 50% of the final grade in the subject. As a result of these central exams, which are in accordance with the European Framework (see above), there is a coherent approach with respect to the curriculum.

In addition, alternative forms of assessment are increasingly being developed in the European countries in the form of the *European Language Portfolio* (see above), an ongoing project being developed by teachers, researchers, and national school authorities, and in the form of *Threshold Levels* for some 20 European languages (see above).

In China, the Matriculation English Test (MET) was introduced in 1984 for all general institutions of higher education. Unlike previous assessment instruments, it tests not only grammar and lexis but also their use, thus leading to a decrease of rote memorization in English learning practice (see, e.g., Hamp-Lyons et al., 1999, p. 59).

MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE, REGIONAL, AND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Several of the responding country experts described programs that aim at teaching the mother tongue of speakers of languages other than the dominant one. These programs may contribute to foreign language success by helping maintain existing language resources in a country and by fostering achievement among minority populations.

Some of the most successful practices in Canada are found in heritage language programs. The Canadian federal policy of bilingualism is framed within a context of multiculturalism that promotes recognition of the value of languages other than English and French (see the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1990). Several provinces declared multiculturalism policies in the early 1990s, and about half of them (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan) have heritage language programs in their official school curricula. However, course offerings and program types differ greatly from school to school, board to board, and among the diverse languages taught. Most are offered either on Saturdays or after school, in schools or in community or religious agencies, primarily to students from the particular ethnic heritage associated with the language being taught. Less commonly, immersion bilingual programs exist, for example, in Ukrainian communities in Alberta and Manitoba, where Ukrainian is used as the medium of instruction for about half the school day. (For further details, see Burnaby & Cumming, 1992; Canadian Education Association, 1991; Cumming, 1997; Cumming, Mackay, & Sakyi, 1994; Cummins, 1983, 1991; Cummins & Danesi, 1990; Helms-Park, 2000; Kaprielian & Churchill, 1994.)

Canada's indigenous (First Nations or Native) population is spread throughout the country, representing diverse languages and cultures as well as unique populations with specific ancestral rights and treaties (many of which are still under negotiation). First Nations language maintenance programs are a relatively recent response to the serious state of decline of several indigenous languages. School programs in some provinces (e.g., Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan) have been

developed to promote specific First Nations languages. (See Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1986, 1987; Burnaby, 1982, 1985; Burnaby & Beaujot, 1986; Kirkness & Bowman, 1992; and Stairs, 1994, for details.)

In New Zealand, so-called "language nests" have been established for Maori an official language but with few first language speakers and for some Pacific Island languages (e.g., Samoan and Tongan). Beginning at the preschool level, children are immersed in the language, which leads them to a choice of bilingual classes or special schools where the language of instruction is Maori, called *kura kaupapa Maori*.

In Australia, there is continued interest in many states in open and supportive school policies integrating ESL and first-language literacy for indigenous and immigrant students, although the federal government has recently shifted toward a focus on English literacy in the primary grades.

With the exception of the "bilingual schools" in Europe (see above), education in European countries aims to integrate immigrants into mainstream society, and mother tongue instruction has been from the official curriculum.

There are, however, schools in bilingual regions where the heritage or indigenous language is used as a medium of instruction. For example, Frisian is taught in Friesland in the Netherlands where it has official language status; German is taught in the Bolzano region of Italy; and in Austria, the languages the minority groups in the border regions are taught German and Slovene in Corinthia; German, Croatian, and Hungarian in the Burgenland; and German and Czech in Upper and Lower Austria.

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WHAT THE UNITED STATES CAN LEARN FROM THIS

Start language education early.

According to those interviewed in other countries, starting language instruction early leads to good results. Most of the countries surveyed begin language instruction in the elementary grades for the majority of students, while most schools in the United States do not offer foreign language classes until middle school or high school. Research funded by the European Union indicates that early language learning can have a very positive effect on students with respect to fostering language skills, a positive attitude toward other languages and cultures, and increased self-esteem. Nevertheless, certain conditions, in terms of both pedagogy and resources, need to be created to achieve early language learning success. It is obvious that we need a national commitment to elementary school language teaching for all children in the United States. The federal government can provide leadership in developing long-term policies for enhanced teacher training, incentives for school districts to offer early language instruction, and a detailed research agenda.

Learn from others.

Other countries face issues similar to ours. Let's look outside our borders and learn from their mistakes and successes. In particular, let's look at countries like Australia and England, which face the similar issue of having citizens who rely solely on English, leaving them vulnerable and dependent on the linguistic competence and goodwill of people from other countries. In addition, we need to look to

countries like ours that have a single official or national language but that are doing a better job than we are of developing citizens with proficiency in more than one language. In our increasingly interconnected world, we need to make much more of an effort to communicate and collaborate with our neighbors in order to strengthen our language teaching efforts.

Conduct long-term research.

It is quite apparent from the comments of many respondents that there is a lack of longitudinal research on early language learning. Questions such as the following need to be addressed: At what age is it best to start language instruction? What proficiency levels are reachable by what methods? Does content-based instruction provide substantially better results than language-based instruction? The U.S. education system can benefit greatly by the development of a long-term research agenda that incorporates longitudinal studies of a variety of early language learning models of instruction.

Provide stronger leadership.

Many of the countries described leadership and collaboration between local school authorities and national agencies as helping foster a stronger language education program. The focus that the Council of Europe has put on languages has had a very positive effect on language education in European countries. Some federal leadership in the United States has existed in isolated cases, such as the support provided by the U.S. Department of Education for the New Visions Conference in June 2000 to enhance the initiative sponsored by Iowa State University's National K12 Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). However, a stronger and more coherent government-wide effort is needed to create an atmosphere and an opportunity to improve language education in the United States.

Identify how technology can improve language instruction.

Many of the countries surveyed are integrating technology into instruction to increase interaction with other speakers of the language and improve class instruction. But a major question remains about how successful technology really is in improving foreign language instruction. The findings call out for specific research on the topic of how best technology can be used to increase students' proficiency in other languages.

Improve teacher education.

Some countries, especially Finland, recruit teachers from among the best high school graduates. Other countries, like Morocco, report that their (English) language teachers are some of the best-trained teachers in the country. The U.S. needs to conduct a more in-depth investigation into how some countries are recruiting very high caliber students to go into teaching while others are providing top quality in-service and pre-service training. We have much to learn in this area.

Develop appropriate language assessments.

Most countries did not highlight the use of appropriate language assessment instruments as a successful aspect of their language programs. The development and implementation of such instruments is an area on which U.S. educators need to focus additional attention. There has been one recent federal initiative with language assessment in the decision to schedule the Foreign Language National Assessment for Educational Progress (FL NAEP).

Designate foreign language as a core subject.

In almost all the countries reviewed with successful language education, foreign language is seen as a core subject in the curriculum and has the same status as other core subjects such as mathematics, science, and reading. Major progress was made in the U.S. with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), where foreign language was recognized as part of the core curriculum. In districts and schools where foreign language study is part of core curriculum, there is a more rigorous approach to curriculum development, professional development, assessment, articulation, and other key program areas. Designating foreign language study as a core subject is essential for a successful program.

Take advantage of the sociolinguistic context.

The U.S. can find a diversity of languages spoken within our borders and in the countries with which we share borders. American educators need to take advantage of the context in which we live by promoting the learning of languages (often called heritage languages) spoken by the many immigrant and refugees within our country, as well as the languages of neighboring Canada and Mexico (French and Spanish in addition to a wide range of indigenous languages). Promoting strong bilingual education programs, where measures are taken to maintain and develop the native language of students while developing English skills, is one way of taking advantage of the multilingual society in which we live. One promising approach is two-way immersion, where equal numbers of language minority and language majority students study together and become bilingual in both languages of instruction.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is apparent from this preliminary study that Americans have a lot to learn from the way other countries offer language education in their schools. All too often U.S. parents and educators feel that they do not have anything to learn from other countries and must only look to other examples within our own country. Often, for example, when it is suggested to educators to look to Canadian immersion research for rationale in implementing intensive language programs in U.S. elementary schools, the response is that their school boards will not accept research that was conducted outside the U.S. The time is now for Americans to open their ears and eyes to the successes of language education around the world. The entire language education profession could benefit greatly from a more systematic type of international collaboration in our language teaching efforts.

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APPENDIX A

Review of Selected Comparative Language Education Studies

The following is a summary of three selected comparative language education reports that were consulted for the purpose of informing this study.

Dickson, P., & Cumming, A. (Ed.) (1996). *Profiles of language education in 25 countries. Language education study of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)*. Berkshire, United Kingdom: National Foundation for Education Research.

This report draws on information gathered in 1995, under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, to provide an authoritative and up-to-date reference work on language policies and foreign and second language education in school systems. A profile for each country is presented in summary form, including a brief description of these areas:

- languages in society and national policies
- organization of language teaching in schools
- curriculum and assessment
- teacher qualifications and support
- resources for language teaching and learning
- current developments and innovative trends

The countries represented are Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United States.

The profiles are of interest to educators, policy makers, government agencies, university students and researchers, and those in commerce and industry wishing to obtain an international overview of the state of language teaching and learning.

National Institute for Educational Research. (1994, June). *Foreign/second language education in*

Asia and the Pacific. Report of a regional seminar, Tokyo, Japan.

This report is a summary of the discussions and recommendations of a regional seminar on the teaching of foreign and second languages sponsored by the National Institute for Educational Research of Japan in 1994. Participants from 13 countries and 2 intergovernmental organizations participated. They were from Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and the Regional Language Centre of the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization.

The objectives of the seminar were to review the state of the art of language education in the participating countries; identify common problems, issues, and trends; and synthesize innovative experiences and approaches in foreign language education.

The following are eight themes common to the specific country reports, along with one of the possible solutions presented in the report to an identified problem related to the theme:

1. Foreign language/second language/mother tongue. In choosing the foreign languages to be taught, it is necessary to take into account factors such as the needs of learners, the availability of resources, and the economic situation of the country concerned.
2. Learner factors. The learning of the target language should be introduced at an early age.
3. Teachers and teacher training. Better incentives should be provided to attract to the teaching profession those graduates with higher levels of achievement.
4. Curriculum. The government should ensure that the number of teaching hours is sufficient to enable students to achieve minimum proficiency in the target language as required by the curriculum.
5. Testing and evaluation. In evaluation, accuracy, fluency, and knowledge should be given appropriate weight according to the level and situation of the students.
6. School environment. The basic requirements for classroom learning should include well-ventilated and illuminated rooms equipped with a blackboard or whiteboard, overhead projector, and a cassette recorder.
7. Research. Teachers should be encouraged to carry out action research.
8. Delivery Systems. Teachers need to be better prepared to develop interactive approaches to instruction and combine face-to-face activities with other forms of delivery, such as distance education.

The participants in the seminar agreed on the following key recommendations:

- Interchange of materials between countries could be significantly improved.
- New mechanisms for teacher exchange need to be devised.
- Various forms of bilateral cooperation could be facilitated.
- Distance education would greatly benefit most language teachers in the region's countries.

- Further regional and sub-regional workshops are recommended, with a priority on teacher education and materials development.
- There needs to be a mechanism established to develop an ongoing program of cooperative research in foreign/second language education in the region.

The Nuffield Languages Inquiry. (2000). *Languages: The next generation*. London: The Nuffield Foundation.

The purpose of this study was to look at the language capability of the United Kingdom and to report on what they need to do as a nation to improve the situation. The authors consider the United Kingdom's language capability and needs in relation to economic competitiveness, personal fulfillment, and civic responsibility. Needs and supply are compared by examining the language provision in each sector of the education system: primary, secondary, 1619, higher education, and lifelong learning.

These are the major recommendations of the findings:

- English is not enough.
- People are looking for leadership to improve the nation's capability in languages.
- Young people from the United Kingdom are at a growing disadvantage in the recruitment market.
- The United Kingdom needs competence in many languages not just French but the education system is not geared to achieve this.
- The government has no coherent approach to languages.
- In spite of parental demand, there is still no UK-wide agenda for children to start language early.
- Secondary school pupils lack motivation or direction.
- Nine out of ten children stop learning languages at 16.
- University language departments are closing, leaving the sector in deep crisis.
- Adults are keen to learn languages but are badly served by an impoverished system.
- The UK desperately needs more language teachers.

The Nuffield Language Inquiry proposed the following actions to address the recommendations in the United Kingdom:

- Designate languages a key skill.
- Drive forward a national strategy.
- Appoint a language supreme.
- Raise the profile of languages.

- Give young children a flying start.
- Improve arrangements in secondary schools.
- Make languages a specific component of the 1619 curriculum.
- Reform the organization and funding of languages in higher education.
- Develop the huge potential of language learning in adult life.
- Break out of the vicious circle of inadequate teacher supply.
- Establish a national standards framework for describing and accrediting language competence.
- Coordinate initiatives linking technology and languages.

The report concludes with detailed examples of how the UK can improve its readiness to meet its future needs in languages, including the formulation of a national strategy for the development of capability in languages.

Hamp-Lyons, L., Hood, S., Sengupta, S., Curtis, A., & Yan, J. (1999). *Best practices: A literature review of effective instructional design and learner processes in acquiring second/foreign language at primary and secondary levels*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Department of English.

This literature review, conducted by the Department of English of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, focuses on effective instructional design and learner processes in acquiring second/foreign language at primary and secondary levels. It documents policies, principles and practices in five countries—the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and China—as well as Hong Kong itself. These countries have in common large numbers of students who are learning English as a second/foreign language, but represent diversity in terms of economies and funding bases for education and in terms of socio-political attitudes to speakers of other languages. They also offer a variety of approaches to English language pedagogy. Despite predictable differences relating to contextual factors, the review identifies a number of recurrent themes that merit consideration for educational policy development in Hong Kong. These themes are listed below, followed by related recommendations.

1. Policy development: Encouragement should be given to all stakeholders in the system to participate in the development of policy and to recognize that the system belongs to its stakeholders.
2. Language policy: While the degree of diversity is not shared by Hong Kong, the growing numbers of mainland Chinese students in the school system here have presented teachers with an unfamiliar heterogeneity which must be taken into account. The provision of language learning support in content classes would be one possibility. The issue of a strong foundation in first language, especially in literacy, would also seem to have important implications for Hong Kong.
3. Assessment: Consideration should be given to the broadening of student assessment in languages and to the equipping of teachers with skills to implement assessment and critique assessment materials.
4. Role and professional development of teachers: There is now growing acceptance of the concept of "lifelong learning," and the professionalization of teachers in terms of development opportunities and

self-concept should be seen as a key priority.

The review recommends that further literature-based research be carried out in countries such as Singapore, India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, where English has never been a first language but nevertheless plays a strong role.

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APPENDIX B

List of Countries and Language Educators Contacted

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APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER and SAMPLE QUESTIONS

October 25, 2000

Dear Colleague,

Thank you very much for agreeing to answer our questions about foreign language education in your country. As I mentioned in our earlier correspondence, foreign language educators in the USA are looking for ways to improve language teaching here. We are collecting information from over 20 countries, including yours, about strategies and practices that improve foreign language education in the hope that they will inform our practices. That is why we need your help!

We would like you to know that we are interested in your views because you came to us highly recommended by scholars in the language field. We are not seeking an "official" or comprehensive response from any country. This is a small-scale, exploratory study, and we hope to be able to highlight what will be most interesting and illuminating about foreign language education in your country.

Since foreign languages are defined differently in different settings, for the purpose of these questions we are interested in the languages considered foreign in your country.

Please answer the following questions with as much information as you can provide. Although our focus is on public (government) school education, we would also like to hear about successful aspects of foreign language education that you know of in private schools.

QUESTIONS

(with a focus on pre-school, primary, and secondary schools)

1. What do you think are three of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in your country? Please consider successful or innovative practices in such areas as, but not limited to, foreign language education policies; curriculum; methodologies; technologies; assessment; research on foreign language education with policy implications; teacher recruitment and retention; and teacher training (preparation and in-service).
2. (a) What, in general, are the national policies (laws or guidelines) [or regional or state policies] in your country for language education? If there are no official policies, please describe the general trends in language education. Note: If the response is too detailed to include in a paragraph here, please refer us to a source where we could find the information.
 - (b) At what age/s do children generally start studying a foreign language or languages?
 - (c) Which languages are most commonly taught in school? Please list in the order of frequency, from most commonly to least commonly taught.
 - (d) We are interested in the less-commonly taught foreign languages in your country that you included at the end of your list above. How are students encouraged to study these languages? Are there any specific methodologies that are used to teach these languages?
 - (e) Is the foreign language ever used as the medium of instruction? (i.e., content-based instruction of a non-foreign language subject). Please describe the circumstances.
 - (f) Are there language assessments on a national (or state/province) level? What are they and what are their purposes? At what ages or grades are they administered?
3. Most countries have students whose home language is different from the major language of instruction. Do any schools in your country promote the retention of these languages through instruction

in them? How?

4. What opportunities and incentives are available for students to continue their foreign language study after secondary school? (e.g., in universities and vocational schools or in the workplace)?
5. Are there any television broadcasts in your country to help children learn another language? If so, how widely are they watched?
6. Are there any foreign language programs in your country that have been identified, or that you would consider, as "model" programs or demonstration sites? If so, please list the names of the schools and their location.
7. In general, would you say that people in your country place a high value on students becoming proficient in school in at least one language other than their native language? In several languages? If yes, what evidence is there to support this conclusion?
8. Are there any important written reports, documents or web sites with information about the practices you have described? If so, please provide us with bibliographic or ordering information for the reports or addresses for the web sites.
9. Please provide us with a short biographical blurb, including your complete name, title, and address.

Please send us your response to these questions by November 6, 2000. We look forward to hearing from you and may contact you to follow-up if we have additional questions about your country's language teaching practices. Thank you very much for your kind assistance!

Sincerely,

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P.S. A summary of our findings will be made available on our web site. We'll let you know when it's available.

Center for Applied Linguistics
Improving communication through better understanding of language and culture

****This information collection effort is part of a project funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the United States Department of Education. ****

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